

Entrepreneurship and Leadership in Marketing the Arts

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Abstract

It is around the particularities of cultural marketing that entrepreneurship and leadership in marketing the arts must be articulated. The marketing process in the arts must start with the artist's work; the manager cannot modify the core product; this implies a fundamental conceptual difference in the marketing process. At the same time, the cultural sector faces a very fragmented and competitive market with definite categories of consumers; the potential client is faced with an incredible number and diversified outputs. To increase the market beyond the current limits of what is experienced by firms in the high art sector means first, a knowledge of the who and why of consumer behaviour and second, an acceptance of this fact by all parties, including the artists. It also implies a strong branding and positioning effort by artistic companies, and a better use of technology and the marketing information system.

Introduction

Entrepreneurship and leadership are interconnected. To be successful, an entrepreneur must possess leadership skills. Leadership suggests an ability to guide the way and have others follow. Entrepreneurship implies an ability to choose a goal and find or assemble the resources necessary to achieve it; it may require one to be innovative and to go beyond or even against the usual ways of doing things. What does this mean in the arts? What does it mean for marketing? In particular, what does it mean for organizations such as symphonies, theatres or museums?

It is around the particularities of cultural marketing that entrepreneurship and leadership in marketing the arts must be articulated. What are these particularities and what do they imply for other aspects of marketing? The purpose of this article is to address these questions. First, marketing in the arts will be defined. Then, specific aspects of consumer behaviour in the field of culture will be analyzed. The results of this analysis will lead to suggestions for entrepreneurship and leadership action in the area of branding and positioning. We will conclude with a discussion of elements related to technology and information systems.

Marketing the Arts: A Definition

Individual art forms or arts events might be described as on a continuum, with high art at one end and popular art at the other (Fitzhugh, 1983), or as a dichotomy between audiences for two distinct forms of entertainment. It is said that high art has a product focus and popular art a market focus. An example of a product-oriented or product-

centred enterprise would be a chamber-music ensemble, a modern dance company or a museum of contemporary art. An example of a market-oriented or market-centred enterprise would be a highly commercial undertaking such as a Hollywood film. Between these two extremes lie a vast range of possibilities. Our discussion will focus on the high art sector and the challenges faced by organizations in this sector in terms of market development.

Marketing is both an art and a science. Its fundamental purpose is to link the organization with its market. Marketing tools are intended to meet the objectives of both the organization and the consumer. However, an enterprise at the high art end of the continuum is not just any enterprise. It is an entity centred on its mission, and the role of the marketing manager is to help it fulfil that mission. More important is the fact that the product follows from this mission and that the choice of product is the responsibility of the artist, not the marketing manager as in the traditional economy.

The fundamental concept in traditional marketing – meeting the needs of the consumer – does not apply in high art. This is what distinguishes cultural marketing from traditional marketing (Colbert and al, 2001). The artistic product does not exist to fulfil a market need. Its *raison d'être* is independent of the market, which is what makes it a particular marketing challenge. Instead of seeking to meet consumers' needs by offering them a product they desire, the arts manager seeks consumers who are susceptible to the product's appeal (Figure 1). This is a major conceptual difference between traditional marketing and arts marketing.

In order to find the right consumers, the manager must acquire as much knowledge as possible about the market and the benefits sought by its various segments. In today's competitive environment, arts managers must also develop and position a brand for the organization. A manager who does not comprehend these notions will not be able to provide the entrepreneurship and leadership necessary to develop his/her organization.

Aspects of Consumer Behaviour

Consumer behaviour is an essential component of marketing. Knowledge gained about a market and its components facilitates responsive arts marketing. At least three questions can be posed concerning arts consumers: Who is the cultural consumer? Why is he/she making a purchase? How does he/she go about making purchase decisions?

Because research in arts marketing is a new field, these questions have not been the subject of a great deal of research (Evrard and Colbert, 2000). While the "who" question has been addressed by more than 40 years of work and the "why" question is in the early stages of exploration, research on the "how" question is just beginning. Let us therefore examine the first two questions, the "who" and the "why."

Who?

No product, in any market, is sold to everyone. This statistical truth applies to cultural products as well as other products. However, because of the extremely fragmented nature of the cultural sector, some distinctions are in order. For example, looking at the sector as a whole, it can be said that virtually 100% of the population consumes at least one type of

cultural product. Indeed, in its broadest sense, the cultural sector encompasses everything from the arts (both high and popular) to heritage – compact discs, movies, books and magazines, radio and television programs – with each of the various markets appropriating its share, whether large or small, whether local or global.

The findings of 40 years of research show that the typical consumer of high art is female, is well educated, earns a higher income than the general population and holds a white-collar job. These statistics apply for all industrialized countries, as do statistics for attendance rates: no country can claim that its people are greater supporters of high art than the people of a neighbouring country. Of course, even in high art educational levels vary among audiences. For contemporary opera, university graduates make up 70–80% of the audience, while for symphonic music the figure goes down to 60% and for jazz to 40%. Attendance at contemporary art museums is composed of 70–80% university graduates, while for historic parks the figure is 20–25%.

Popular art, in contrast, attracts spectators from all educational backgrounds and income levels. In fact, the proportion of university graduates in audiences of popular art is identical to the proportion in the general population – 15–20%.

This distinction must be refined in two ways. First, it must be seen as on a continuum, not as a discrete variable; there are films that belong at the high art end of the continuum and dance productions that belong at the popular art end, with many types of performances being located somewhere in between the two extremes. Second, the question of quality is not at issue here: everyone agrees that there are quality products all along the continuum (clearly, however, the level of expertise among art-goers varies; it is assumed that most people cannot make a quality judgement as precisely as an expert can; their judgements often end with “I liked this production” or “I did not like it”).

Table 1 identifies audiences in sociodemographic terms. Although these figures are from the United States, similar statistics have been reported for Europe (Council of Europe, 1993) and Australia (Throsby and Withers, 1979; Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2000).

In addition, this generalization is based on averages. Although less-educated individuals with lower incomes may be great consumers of high art, their attendance is low compared to their relative weight in the population. On the other hand, there are well-educated people with high salaries who are not interested in high art and gladly keep their distance.

Analysis of the traits of the typical cultural consumer reveals further details. For example, dance audiences are younger and even more female in composition than audiences for the other performing arts; similarly, more women than men read novels – although a larger proportion of men than women read daily newspapers. In the film sector, there are two very different segments of avid cinema-goers; one is dominated by a young clientele (15–25 years of age), the other of educated people over 25.

Organizations that have a high proportion of university graduates in their audiences are targeting a rather limited market segment (15–20% of the total market), even if these people are great consumers of cultural products. Popular art caters to a much larger market segment.

Knowledge of these statistics is useful for a sponsor attempting to reach specific targets based on demographic characteristics. But knowing that an audience for orchestral

music, for example, is made up of 60% university graduates does not help in preparing a targeted strategy. The marketing manager needs a different kind of information.

This is not to say that the composition of high art audiences is a result of targeting. Arts organizations want to reach everybody in the market, but this simply does not happen.

However, it is disturbing to find that despite more than 40 years of public investment in the field of high art, with a clear target of democratization, organizations devoted to high art still attract mostly highly educated consumers. Furthermore, the results are similar regardless of the political system (Zimmer and Toepler, 1996). Arts organizations in the United States receive only 5% of their total revenues from governments (National Endowment for the Arts, 1997, McCarthy et al., 2001), while the figure rises to 80% in some European countries like Germany or France (Sauvanet, 1999), yet the results are identical in sociodemographic terms. At the same time, many large organizations are experiencing financial difficulties and are unable to increase their audiences, or are even faced with decreasing audiences.

To modify this profile, the marketing leadership must become rooted in the communities in which their organizations are situated. In a number of countries – Canada is a good example – arts managers are focused on convincing government agencies to increase their grants. They also speak eagerly about the need for advocacy – meaning to convince politicians of the importance of the arts – yet they fail to get members of their own community on side. Becoming more deeply rooted in the community can have at least two benefits: wider audiences and a broader base of supporters for advocacy purposes. In order to reach this larger community, managers will have to gain some insight into the interests of non-consumers of the arts. And in order to attract more potential consumers as well as new market segments, they will have a look on why people are or are not attracted to high arts.

Why?

The questions of utmost interest to marketing experts in the arts are why do people attend or not attend the arts (high art in our case), and, among those who do not, what can be learned about differences in motivations?

The answer to the first question lies in one's childhood. Studies have identified four factors that positively affect adult cultural preferences: values transmitted by family, values transmitted at school, having been exposed to the arts as a child and practising an art form as an amateur. In general, tastes and preferences are believed to be set before the age of 20 (Kolb, 2001; Council of Europe, 1993; Leroy, 1980; Ford Foundation, 1974). Any measure taken to interest children in the arts is, then, crucially important. Rarely will someone who has not had these values instilled at an early age discover opera or ballet at the age of 50. The same holds true for popular music. Responses to the question "What is your favourite popular music?" will usually reflect influences at around the age of 17.

It might be argued, therefore, that reaching young audiences is the responsibility of everyone in the arts milieu. This means providing children with memorable artistic experiences. It means targeting future teachers during their training to connect them to values compatible with the arts. And it means encouraging amateur practice of the arts. All cultural organizations and artists should coordinate their efforts with this objective in

mind, while respecting the particular mission and means at the disposal of each. This may well entail deviating from the usual paths.

Research on motivation in arts attendance, and on the reasons for specific choices between art forms and between different aesthetic paths within an art form, was late in starting. The first serious attempts to explore these areas date from the 1980s. Hirschman and Holbrook (1982) propose that attending arts events fulfils hedonic rather than utilitarian needs. This approach has been under refinement since the early 1990s. There are those who go to a museum, for example, in search of specific information (such as art history students). Among the other reasons for attending the arts is the core product. What brings a person out to a performance on a particular evening may have nothing to do with the art form itself. While the person must enjoy at a minimum level what is happening on stage, there are other, more compelling, reasons for purchasing a ticket to an event. Several systems for classifying those reasons have been proposed. One such classification system divides the market into four segments based on motivation to attend (Botti, 2000).

A thirst for knowledge is the prime motivation for a segment of arts consumers we will call “cultural needs seekers.” These people seek direct functional or cultural benefits from the product. A number of studies have found, for example, that acquisition of knowledge is one of the primary reasons for visiting a museum.

Another segment of the market seeks symbolic benefits (symbolic needs); this relates to the psychological meaning of the product for the person, allowing them to communicate their personality and values via their consumer choices. Human beings need to tell others who they are, and the consumption of products is one way of doing so. This is illustrated in the importance teenagers attribute to clothing associated with a particular brand; in order to be part of the group, they must wear the right brand of shoes or T-shirt. The same effect can be achieved by being seen at a particular event, by being able to discuss a particular type of arts production or by purchasing products in a museum shop – they illustrate one’s access to the markers of social status.

While the acquisition of symbolic benefits sends a message about who we are, for many other consumers arts attendance is a consumption ritual focused on social relationships (Gainer, 1995). An arts venue provides an opportunity for people to meet with their peers, while the performance or exhibition itself gives them something to talk about before or after the event. Some couples might buy season tickets to the theatre in order to spend some time together without their children. These behaviours fill social needs.

Emotional benefits (emotional needs) are closely linked to the desire for an experience that is compelling, stimulating and fun. This need is not related to consumption as a means of solving a problem, filling a void, communicating a message or acquiring social status. It is about getting away from problems or daily routines.

Of course these categories are not exclusive. An individual’s main motivation may put them into one category while some of the benefits they seek may be associated with another category. A person can be motivated by social needs yet at the same time enjoy the core product (cultural needs).

By classifying benefits in this way, marketing managers can adjust their marketing mix to reflect the core needs of individuals, and therefore gain a reputation for meeting consumer needs. Consumers may choose a particular theatre to attend with

friends because it fulfils their social needs more than any other theatres in the community. In a large city with a vast range of possibilities, consumers might try to fill two needs (for example, social and functional) with the same product. They may be attracted by several events but choose the one that best meets their social or symbolic needs.

Beating the competition, and showing leadership, can be a way to position oneself regarding specific elements unrelated to the functional benefits of the core product. The idea is not to modify the core product but to tap into an auxiliary or secondary product as a means of attracting customers. A willingness to take such elements into account is a necessary first step. This relates to arguments for bringing consumers to the venue; other secondary products are linked to the consumer experience itself. Providing an area for older people to rest while visiting a museum, or providing a place for visitors to sit and chat about the event being featured, may not attract new people to the venue but will enhance their experience and may result in repeat visits. These are circumstantial dimensions that affect consumer satisfaction (Colbert and al, 2001).

Price: A Special Case

By exploring the different reasons why people choose a particular art form, be it high art or popular art, we can gain insight into consumer behaviour. For example, it can help to situate pricing in the wider context. In the high art sector, managers and artists often are convinced that lowering ticket prices or even going so far as to offer free admission will attract not only more people but those with a lower educational background. This assumption does not hold. Witness the experience of museums that have no entrance fee yet have difficulty expanding their audience beyond the well educated. If visiting a museum is not part of one's preferred set of leisure activities, it makes no difference whether admission is free or not. This same person may well be prepared to spend money on other leisure activities or products. While price is one consideration in the decision whether to attend a cultural event, childhood experience and motivation play a much larger role. Efforts to extend audiences to include less-educated market segments must take these factors into account.

In the consumer's mind, price is as much a rational element as a psychological variable. This explains why ticket price is not necessarily a barrier to attendance. The two reasons most frequently cited by survey respondents for not attending an arts event more often are lack of time and the cost of the ticket. These two reasons pertain to two different segments of the potential audience (Colbert and al, 1998). High-income earners belong to the first segment, while students and seniors, for example, are more sensitive to price. High-income earners are usually business people or professionals, who tend to be very busy and to travel more than people in other work categories. They would like to attend arts events more often but lack the time. Moreover, these art lovers are willing to pay a premium for a flexible subscription that will assure them of an alternative date if they are unable to attend a performance. In contrast, students and seniors have plenty of time but less disposable income. They are thus more price-sensitive and open to pricing options. Differentiated pricing is, then, the solution to meeting the needs of different market segments.

The other component of price is the effort necessary for an interested person to buy and consume the product. Although effort is linked to logistics, it is also linked to consumers' perceived risk of wasting their money, wasting their time or being bored.

This is called the *functional risk*. Several other risks are at play in the consumer's decision-making process. The risk of being seen in a place that is incompatible with our perception of how others view us is the *social risk*. The risk of being in a place incompatible with our self-image is a *psychological risk*. The sum of the risks associated with the money and leisure time that are at stake is the *economic risk*. The greater the number of risks present, the more the price is perceived as being high. Taking risks requires enormous effort on the part of the consumer, and many consumers are willing to pay a premium in order to avoid them and to be assured of satisfaction. In the cultural sector new products continually appear on the market; thus the risk is perhaps greater in this sector than in others. In order to lower the perceived risks, the product must be made more attractive.

Nothing can make a consumer buy a product he or she does not want. Sometimes, however, misperceptions play a role in preventing a person from attending an event. Several decades ago, a respondent to a Ford Foundation (1974) survey gave "I do not possess a long dress and my husband does not have a tuxedo" as a reason for not attending a concert. This respondent was obviously misguided about the kind of dress necessary to attend a concert. In a similar vein, potential visitors to a museum may stay away because they do not know how to look at art and fear they will appear stupid in the eyes of other visitors. Consumers base their decisions on the signals they perceive in the market and how they perceive reality.

In short, price is a highly psychological variable. Sometimes it is the only cue a consumer has to build on in order to judge a product's value or quality.

In conclusion, leadership in terms of pricing means to not give away what we can sell, but to formulate pricing strategies with different segments in mind and to add value to the cultural experience. This added value may be an element of fun, a social dimension or some secondary product that will attract the consumer's attention.

Competition, Brand Image and Positioning

Any arts organization is in competition with other organizations in the same sector as well as with other leisure products. Notwithstanding the above discussion about consumers of high art, we know that well-educated individuals are interested in all types of leisure products: they might appreciate classical music but also attend movies; they might read novels but also travel abroad. Those with less education may choose more practical leisure activities (gardening, handicrafts or visiting family and friends); for these people, a cultural outing may be more of a social occasion.

A basic concept in consumer behaviour is what is called the "evoked set of brands or products." No individual can evaluate all of the thousands of products available on the market before making a purchase decision. In order to keep our sanity, we evaluate only a small number of brands or products, or an "evoked set." For marketing managers, then, tapping into the consumer's mind and having their products become part of the consumer's evoked set is crucial. They must build a strong brand and position it accurately. In a large market such as a big city, the arts marketing manager must be particularly aware of the competition and the need for careful positioning.

Branding

A brand is a synthesis of product characteristics in the mind of the consumer. This synthesis may be clear or it may be confused. For regular patrons the image may be precise, while for people who know the product only through the media, the perception may be completely inaccurate. It is the marketing manager's job to make sure that potential consumers get the right message. A number of cultural institutions are readily identifiable (Metropolitan Opera, Guggenheim Museum, Comedie Française, Sydney Opera House) even among people who have never visited them.

Marketing specialists try to give a brand a unique personality. With the help of computer design, for example, a domestic appliance such as a toaster can be transformed into an appealing animal with its own personality. The publicist will tap into familiar and agreeable features to make the product attractive and interesting to the consumer. The name of the game in the branding war is to attract the consumer to one's product and away from the competition.

The arts milieu is currently tremendously competitive. Consumers are faced with so many choices that they cannot possibly process all of them. Branding offers consumers a short-cut in the processing of information.

From the point of view of the organization, branding allows the marketing manager to simplify communication with the target segment: the stronger and clearer the brand, the less information will be needed to make the product understood – or the easier the task of persuasion. The Guggenheim Museum and the British Museum are examples of organizations that feature the five characteristics of a strong brand (Caldwell, 2000; Scott, 2000): their name is well known, they are perceived as being of high quality, their name is associated with salient elements (collections, special events), their visitors are loyal (both museums are popular tourist destinations), and they feature identifiable tangible as well as intangible assets (architecture, quality of curators). The marketing managers of these museums can rest assured that their brands are part of any consumer's evoked set.

Positioning

Positioning is simply "the place that a product or a brand occupies in the consumer's mind." It is articulated in a triad: product, segment and competition. Note that we are speaking here of perception, not necessarily reality.

In the evoked set of products, the consumer compares all competing brands on the basis of their salient characteristics and then places them in order of preference. Every brand, then, maintains a position in the consumer's mind based on its perceived characteristics, the consumer's preferences and the competition. Thus positioning is based on a synthesis of brand characteristics. The stronger and clearer this synthesis, the better the brand's chances of achieving good positioning.

Some Leadership Elements

Many managers in the high art milieu complain that too few people are interested in their products. We have seen that this sector relies on a very limited market. In order to increase their audiences, these managers must either attract more consumers from among

potential market segments or find a way to attract consumers from outside the traditional arts market. Price may be one incentive but it is not a panacea.

We have also seen that competition from all sectors of the leisure industry puts tremendous pressure on consumers' leisure time. The offerings are many and diverse. Marketing managers in the arts must take a leadership role in the development of branding and positioning.

An important element of leadership in arts marketing is the building of a diversified market. Arts organizations should involve the community in this task, by building a positive image and establishing a sense of ownership among members of the community. However, without a clear vision of the where the organization stands in the minds of potential consumers, and what benefits these consumers hope to gain, such efforts may not be successful.

Leadership also means acceptance of the fact that every arts organization cannot be expected to be at the cutting edge, just as every organization cannot be expected to reach the entire market. The broader the market, the more segments it will comprise and thus allow organizations to specialize and target different segments. The market segment of highly educated people will not grow appreciably. Any increase in the number of artists and organizations will depend on expansion of the audience beyond traditional market segments, and the only way to effect such an expansion is to make products, elements and dimensions more interesting to the less educated – those people for whom appreciation of high art was not instilled in childhood.

Entrepreneurship entails improving levels of customer service. Arts supporters are also consumers of other products and have come to expect good service. Most companies spare no effort in making the consumer experience easy and agreeable, from initial contact to delivery to the post-purchase experience. Consumers are no longer prepared to wait in line at the box office or on busy telephone lines; they command respect. The notion of efficient service is not something that arts managers generally take the time to consider, but it could mean a competitive edge for an organization functioning in an overcrowded arts market such as a large city.

Following upon this idea, the differentiation of contact points as well as innovative promotion strategies point to increased use of the Internet, or e-commerce. More and more people are becoming familiar with this medium, and arts organizations will have to take into account the fact that a fairly large segment of the market might wish to buy a ticket any time of day and any day of the week. In addition, the Internet can be a powerful medium for reaching small specialty markets around the world. For instance, the segment interested in baroque music performed by a small ensemble is very narrow in any one country but huge world-wide. The Internet is a way of quickly and cheaply spreading the word about, for example, the release of a new CD.

Finally, the development of efficient internal data collection and processing is becoming essential in identifying the strengths and weaknesses of an organization. To set an objective of market development is not enough; one must also determine whether the target has been reached, and in which segment of the market and at what pace and so forth. One must also be able to assess the quality people perceive of their experience (secondary product).

Entrepreneurship and leadership in arts marketing must be congruent with the targeted market and, of course, with the organization's mission. Just because an

organization is product-centred, however, does not mean that it must take a conservative approach to marketing; on the contrary, it can take an innovative approach. It is more often a question of vision than of means. Survival in the arts is no longer dependent on public funding alone. High art organizations can attract larger audiences by showing leadership, such as by offering secondary products of interest to both potential audiences and audiences outside current markets, by broadening their sociodemographic base, by improving customer service, and by making more use of the Internet and marketing information systems. Organizations that are already taking action in this regard should be encouraged.

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Table 1**Attendance Rates for Arts Events, by Demographic Group, United States, 1997**

	Jazz	Classical Music	Opera	Musical	Play	Ballet	Other Dance	Art Museum	Historic Park
All Adults	11.9%	15.6%	4.7%	24.5%	15.8%	5.8%	12.4%	34.9%	46.9%
Sex									
Male	13.2	14.2	4.0	22.3	14.6	4.1	11.7	34.3	48.2
Female	10.6	16.8	5.2	26.7	16.8	7.5	12.9	35.5	45.8
Race									
Hispanic	6.8	8.4	3.1	15.7	9.7	4.5	14.6	29.4	32.7
White	12.1	17.5	5.2	26.5	16.6	6.5	11.9	36.1	50.8
African American	15.6	9.6	2.1	22.4	16.4	3.9	13.4	31.1	36.5
American Indian	11.0	8.9	5.1	15.4	5.0	1.2	10.6	21.8	41.9
Asian	10.3	16.2	6.9	20.4	18.1	4.3	14.5	41.7	43.6
Age									
18 to 24	15.1	16.4	5.4	26.0	20.2	6.9	14.7	38.3	46.3
25 to 34	12.7	11.4	4.0	22.5	13.3	4.7	11.1	36.5	49.4
35 to 44	14.3	14.3	4.4	25.8	14.7	6.6	13.6	37.3	52.3
Education									
Grade school	1.8	2.1	.02	6.0	3.1	1.5	7.3	6.0	12.7
Some high school	3.4	3.9	1.5	12.6	7.2	1.8	6.6	14.4	26.6
High school graduate	6.8	8.3	1.7	15.7	9.1	3.6	9.2	24.6	40.5
Some college	15.4	18.1	5.2	28.4	18.9	6.5	13.7	43.2	56.3
College graduate	21.3	28.0	10.2	43.6	27.7	10.8	17.8	57.7	66.6
Graduate school	27.7	44.5	14.3	50.3	37.2	14.4	24.7	69.8	72.7

Source: National Endowment for the Arts (1997).

Figure 1
The Marketing Model for Cultural Enterprises

